



MEETING NOTES

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

DATE: September 15, 2011

LOCATION: Como Street Car Station

ATTENDING: Kelly Mitchell, Dan Marckel, Steve Grans, Randy Quale, Nick Eloff, Jody Dueber, Mark Ross, Paul Kolias, Deb Robinson, Katie and Emily Cashel, Lynn Gallandat, Glenn Baron, Triesta Brown, Elizabeth Stiffler, Tom Dapper, Kathy Korum, Alice Messer

NOTES BY: Alice Messer

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Alice Messer presented project schedule, budget and goals of meeting which included:

- \$413,000 for the design, planning and construction of a play area
- Schedule is to meet with task force fall 2011 to develop a conceptual play ground design, develop construction documents during the winter 2011 and have construction start spring 2012
- Present existing conditions and site analysis of the play area
- Summary results from the public survey
- Receive feedback on a preferred play conceptual layout.

Alice Messer presented design standards that City of Saint Paul follows when designing play area. Design standards must be addressed through concept design in conjunction with recreational needs of public. These include:

- safety
- site constraints
- multiple use
- sustainability
- operations
- varied social/ethnic use
- maintenance/operational needs
- providing age separated equipment,
- accessibility (ADA requirements that require all new playgrounds to be accessible to those with disabilities)
- durability/longevity (15-20 year)
- safety guidelines with material testing

Alice Messer presented existing conditions and analysis of existing site.

- Existing play equipment installed in 1990
- Tucked in between beautiful mature oak trees offering great shade
- Surrounded by an asphalt path with connections to surrounding park amenities, including a public restroom and drinking fountain and connections to other Como attractions.

Pros of play area include:

- central location in Como Park
- access to public restrooms
- mature oak trees that offer shade
- existing seating areas that allow visibility to the play area
- ability to expand the existing footprint without impacting existing trees

Cons of play area include:

- no swings
- no separated play areas
- no drinking fountain
- non-descript play area for regional park
- violations to current safety standards
- not handicap accessible
- play area not adjacent to restrooms

Three ash trees are to be removed due to the presence of emerald ash borer and Forestry's stance on removal of ash trees as they serve as hosts for EAB. . Removal of these three ash trees begins to open up additional area for expansion of the play area.

Alice Messer presented survey results.

- Over 87 responses were received.
- More than half of respondents either live next to or within walking distance of Como Play area. 33% that use the play area from outside the City of Saint Paul
- Most users have only been to the play area 1 to 3 times in the last year
- More than half of the users have brought children that are in the 2-5 year range, with 31% in the 5-12 year range.
- Playing on equipment is the top activity when visiting the play area. Active recreation, picnicking and socializing also occur. Maintaining un-programmed open space and seating for socialization will be important elements of the play area.
- Activities that people would like to see are pretty much balanced. Digging and water play area the top selections, but swinging and climbing are all pretty close.
- Images were provided to develop a play character for the play area. The majority selected "natural" play which uses landforms, natural materials. Imaged used to spark conversation and not to be interpreted as exact image for Como play area.

Open ended question, "What do you like about the current play area?" To summarize, most people liked:

- The shade
- Place to play while picnic
- Seating and surrounding picnic tables
- Connections to existing elements in Como
- Easy to keep eye on children

Open ended question, "What other suggestions/comments do you have that would inform the design process for Como Regional Park Play Area?"

- Needs to be accessible
- Maintenance of play area and keeping clean

- Water fountain close by
- Maintaining natural beauty of park
- Higher thrill for older children
- Encourage nature and healthy outdoor activity
- Visibility of children in play area
- Don't over design
- Smaller area for younger children

Consensus is to keep the play area in the same location due to limited impact on surrounding environment and to the advantages of existing connections to picnicking, parking, restrooms, water and shade.

Alice Messer presented 4 concept plans based on existing conditions and results from the public survey.

- Concept 1 – is based on the comments in regards to provided separated play areas for older and younger children. It uses the main paved trail as a divider to separate the two play areas, while protecting the existing trees.
- Concept 2 – provides a continuous play area that keeps pedestrian activity to the north and places the majority of play elements in the shade. Existing trees preserved and allows visibility to play elements targeted for different age groups.
- Concept 3 – provides a connection on the southern edge of the play area and integrates the oak trees in the play area by wrapping around the existing trees. Larger play area is located in the sun.
- Concept 4 – provides three smaller play nodes. This concept allows for more defined play areas within each node.

(See project website for concept plans.)

Community comments/questions included:

1. What is capacity of existing play area? Compare to proposed play capacity.
2. Will the play area be a traffic draw?
3. Could there be anything for someone other than children? Porch type swings?
4. Please include and encourage biking to play area.
5. Could rain water be captured and made into simple water feature?
6. Swings are a high priority. Explore idea of having separate swinging bay, similar to Newell Park or combine in play area.
7. Ability to see children playing is important – like central play area for this reason
8. Pedestrian traffic through play area – desire to minimize and keep circulation from cutting through play area. Discussed uncomfortable feeling of walking thru a play area.
9. Explore relocating picnic tables if need to
10. Add goals of 1) fitting into surround environment and 2) easy maintenance to project goals.
11. Como Outdoor Woodland Classroom can see utilizing play area for smaller children in 2-5 age range and offer connection to nature
12. More picnic tables that ADA compliant
13. Include tree plantings for replacement of storm damaged trees – place so as to add

additional shade to northern edge of play area

14. Explore play events that include water and sculptural components along with nature

15. Easily maintained materials so it stays in good shape is important

16. Task force members voted on preferred play concept at meeting conclusion.

Concept 1 – no votes.

Concept 2 – 11 votes

Concept 3 received three votes and comment of liking without path through play area and liked incorporation of existing trees into play area.

Concept 4 – one comment of liking without paths through.

Actions:

- Alice to develop play area concept plans based on Concept 2. Concepts will explore placing swings in alternate location, swings within play area, and play elements for older children with higher thrill. Natural play theme reflecting and respecting existing conditions. No bright colors used.
- Next meeting scheduled for **October 11, 2011 from 6:30 to 8:30**, Como Streetcar Station
- Presentation materials posted on project website at:
<http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=4618>

Please contact Alice Messer at 651-266-6412 if any items are missing from the meeting notes or items were listed incorrectly